

[Gor Svenson #5a]

LIVING LORE Wheeler

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(Carrying on record of interviews with Gor Svenson, Swedish-born American lobsterman who for most of his adult years was a quarryman in Rockport and Gloucester, Mass.)

"It is now that I do not care whether the fire alarm blows or not. I used like go fire. I only go over Rookport fire once. But I down in Rockport then visit feller. Used always go fire Pigeon Cove when not working. They got whistle on tool company. Somebody ring box there's a fire, whistle goes tool company so many times. Different box different times. No fireman right there to go like some places. When whistle goes those firemen live near run to fire / station, Carl Storey has store, he drives engine. They do not wait till other fellers come. They go right then to box number of times whistle.

"Other fellers drive that box there own car, or got out in street, stop car, somebody else take them. They get to fire pretty quick, that Pigeon Cove fireman, and they put right out quick, too. I used go all time, like see put out fire. Month two months sone one night eight nine o'clock hear whistle, I count. Right near. I think. Box corner Curtis Street, Stockholm Avenue. Run out of house, meet other feller, he say box whistle down Pigeon Hill Street. Go box I say, nobody there, go box he say, nobody there, too. Lot automobiles, though, go both ways. I yell to feller, "Hey, where's fire, harr?" He yell, "Fire's in stove!" Funny feller, he thinks. Not funny I think. I wait long time, don't see nothing. Don't see fire engine. Don't see fire.

"I go home there maybe almost hour, whistle goes one, two, means no more fire, bring engine back to station. Pretty soon I hear fellers 2 go by house, I go out see. I don't want say, " Where was fire, harr? " Feller might say maybe, " Fire was in stove. " But I don't

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want them just go by, know nothing, too. So I say, "You find fire, harr?" And feller tell me. Just was little fire in school-house down Storey Street, maybe boys go in start fire. So I don't go fire some more. No good go fire, don't see fire.

"Time I see fire Rockport I down Rockport visit feller, six seven years gone summer time. [Hear?] whistle. Go outdoors. Do not need count whistle. Can see fire. Big fire. Down behind cemetery behind beach. Old factory. Old isinglass factory. Burn like hell. [Burn?] too much for Rockport firemen. Some feller send Gloucester more firemen. You know how long take Gloucester firemen get over here, harr? Take only five minutes. Stop any someone's car try go Gloucester from loop, say, " No. Go Long Beach. " Stop car try go Rockport up hill near garage, Say, " No. Go East Gloucester, Brier Neck. " No cars at all. Fire engines have whole road himself. Only take five minutes.

Cannot stop fire, but. Do not let fire set anything more. I watch till factory all burn gone. Everybody watch. Last part best. Roof all gone then. Floors all gone. Two sides all gone. But one corner was elevator. All gone but windlass and timber hold windlass. Just before fire all burn, timber burn and windlass fall. Funny see it fall.

"I would not like be fireman, harr! I like make dollar, two sometime put out forest fires. I ask John Martin, fire-warden, I could help put out forest fire sometime he say, " Maybe. " One time there is fire over Woodbury Hill between Nickerson's Pit and Folly Gove. Lot hot days before no rain. Brush burn quick. Right down near all houses Folly Cove, I go over fire, think I got job fifty cents hour, got give me job, got give somebody job, put out fire, save houses. I go over fire, say, " Give me job, harr? " Feller say, " No. " I think maybe feller sorry he say, " No. "

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But wind change, wind die down, fire go out. I could not be fireman, any so. Lobsterman could not be fireman, could not get to fire before fire out.

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"One time I see big fire in movies. Oil pits burn gone. They have all pictures of it in movies. Yon can see. That was last time I go to movies, harr! That was seven, eight year ago feller give me ride Salisbury Beach. We spend all day there. They got thing you ride go up slow go down fast, too fast. They got thing you go in they cover you up, can't see nothing. They got places you put pennies in see all kinds everything. After we stay there long time we go movies. I do not like movies so good I think I not go again, harr.

"Young fellers think they got go movies all time, go swimming go ball game. I go ball game one time. Crazy Bunch fellers out there hot sun hit ball with stick, some time don't hit, run all around. No ball game in Sweden. Never go ball game more time, me. Something else crazy do go swimming. All time young fellers want go swimming. Go down Folly. Go down Front Beach. Go over quarry hole Halibut Point. That something I do not even some time. I have been on Cape almost it is forty year, not one time I have been swimming. In Sweden people do not get swimming. It is crazy. ?

"One thing I never do, but, I think I like to do even. One summer over Folly Cove they have what is call speed-boat, go on top of water very quick for half-dollar. I would like to go on that speed-boat on top of water. I would not pay that feller half-dollar to give me ride on that boat, harr. I would not pay him nothing. But I would ride on it, harr!

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